

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 9-14 and 16-17 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Please amend claim 2 as indicated below.

Please add claim 20, which corresponds to originally filed claim 1, as indicated below.

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

**Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1 (cancelled)

Claim 2 (currently amended) ~~A method for reducing the number of messages to be processed by a control processor in a load balancer comprising the steps of:~~

~~receiving a request to establish a TCP connection from a client by a network processor in said load balancer;~~

~~establishing said TCP connection with said client via handshake messages between said network processor and said client;~~

~~receiving a request message from said client;~~

~~bundling said request message and information from said handshake messages involved in establishing said TCP connection by said network processor;~~

~~transmitting said bundled message to said control processor by said network; and~~ **The method as recited in claim 20 further comprising the steps of:**

identifying a server in a server farm to service said client's request message by said control processor;

bundling said client's request message and a control message by said control processor; and

transmitting said bundled message comprising said client's request message and said control message to said network processor.

Claim 3 (original) The method as recited in claim 2, wherein said server in said server farm is identified using information extracted from said client's request message.

Claim 4 (original) The method as recited in claim 2, wherein said control message comprises information used to enable said network processor to create entries in a forwarding table to ensure packets from said client are transmitted to said server and to ensure packets from said server are transmitted to said client.

Claim 5 (original) The method as recited in claim 2, wherein said control message comprises information to establish a TCP connection between said load balancer and said server.

Claim 6 (original) The method as recited in claim 2 further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request to terminate said TCP connection from said server by said network processor;

facilitating said termination of said connection between said server and said client;

bundling information regarding a series of closed connections by said network processor; and

transmitting said bundled message regarding said series of closed connections to said control processor by said network processor.

Claim 7 (original) The method as recited in claim 6 further comprising the step of:

extracting information from said bundled message regarding said series of closed connections by said control processor.

Claims 8-19 (cancelled)

Claim 20 (new) A method for reducing the number of messages to be processed by a control processor in a load balancer comprising the steps of:

receiving a request to establish a TCP connection from a client by a network processor in said load balancer;

establishing said TCP connection with said client via handshake messages between said network processor and said client;

receiving a request message from said client;

bundling said request message and information from said handshake messages involved in establishing said TCP connection by said network processor; and

transmitting said bundled message to said control processor by said network processor.